

THE ARMY LEADERS' DESK REFERENCE FOR SOLDIER/FAMILY READINESS



**OPERATION
READY**
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You



The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness

Family Deployment Readiness for the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve

This desk reference is a new publication of the Operation READY (Resources for Educating about Deployment and You) materials developed under a contract with Headquarters, Department of the Army, Community and Family Support Center, and the Texas Cooperative Extension of the Texas A&M University System.

**Grant Administrator and Project Director
for Texas Cooperative Extension**
Nancy Granovsky

Project Manager
Granville E. (Gene) Tyson

Editor and Design
Susan Lee

Production Coordinator
Diane Wisneski

Cover Illustrator
Emma Stark

Operation READY: Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

**Texas Cooperative Extension
The Texas A&M University System
in cooperation with
The United States Army
Community and Family Support Center**

2002

THE ARMY LEADERS' DESK REFERENCE FOR SOLDIER/FAMILY READINESS

Introduction

The *Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness* is designed for commanders and leaders to understand and address family readiness. In a clear and forthright manner, it presents the key elements in a unit's family readiness responsibilities.

An excerpt from AR 600-20 (Draft) on the Family and Soldier Readiness System is provided, along with figures depicting the FRG organization (Figure 1, page 15) and the family support structure (Figure 2, page 16).

An "Open Letter to Commanders" is worth reading. The author deals with the commander's leadership of soldiers and families. His ideas deserve serious consideration.

Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge LTC (Ret.) James C. Peters for his ideas that initially brought this guide into reality. His understanding of the Family and Soldier Readiness System is deep and far-reaching. We appreciate his contributions that gave it foundation.

Operation READY Materials

The Operation READY curriculum is a series of training modules, videotapes, and resource books published for the Army as a resource for Army Community Service (ACS), State Family Program Coordinators (SFPC), and Army Reserve Family Readiness Program (FRP) staff in training Army soldiers and families who are faced with deployments.

This revised curriculum includes the following training modules and reference materials:

- The Army Family Readiness Handbook
- The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness (new)
- The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook (new)
- The Army FRG Leader's Handbook
- Family Assistance Center
- Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness
- Homecoming and Reunion

Videos developed for the Operation READY curriculum by University of California–Riverside Cooperative Extension, to supplement the above materials are:

- *Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Life, Think ACS* (new)
- *Introduction to Operation READY* (new)
- *Family Assistance Center*
- *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*
- *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles*
- *Coping with Stress*
- *Making Your Reunion Work*

Children’s Workbooks for use by parents with their children.

These materials have been distributed to all U.S. Army installations throughout the world, as well as to U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard commands. The materials are distributed in hard copy form as well as stored on CD-ROM disks. They are also available through the virtual Army Community Service website, **www.goacs.org**. For copies of the above materials, check with your local Army Community Service, Mobilization and Deployment office, SFPC and FRP offices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMMANDERS

An Open Letter to Commanders	1
------------------------------------	---

ABOUT THE *DESK REFERENCE*

About the <i>Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness</i>	3
Purpose	3
Scope	3
Primary References	3
Assumptions	4
Concepts and Definitions	4
Soldier/Family Readiness Initiatives for Commanders	5

SOLDIER/FAMILY READINESS SYSTEM

Family and Soldier Readiness System	7
Concept	7
Soldier/Family Readiness Roles, Structures, and Responsibilities	8
Roles	8
Structures	9
Responsibilities	11

SAMPLE READINESS PLANS

Sample Family Readiness Plan—Battalion Level	19
Purpose	19
References	19
Key Tasks	19
Sample Family Readiness Plan—Unit Level	21
Purpose	21
References	21
Key Tasks	21

PREDEPLOYMENT BRIEFINGS

Predeployment Briefings	23
Predeployment Training.....	25

SUCCESSFUL FRGs

Successful FRGs in the Army Today	27
Family Readiness Group Organization and Operations.....	27
Family Problems	27
Family Readiness Group Leadership	29
Family Readiness Group Tasks Before, During, and After Deployment	29
Training Family Readiness Group Leaders	31
Other Considerations.....	31

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMMANDERS

by LTC Larry Ingraham

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

Ladies and gentlemen: Rank and position are conferred from above, but leadership is confirmed from below. Your selection as an Army leader is evidence the Army has confidence in you, but this is the easy vote. In combat, a silent vote of confidence is taken on every order. The same holds for training, but the returns take longer to count. Now you win the second, more difficult and really important vote of confidence. You say you do not wish to be liked, only respected, but too often you confuse respect with fear. You often appear uncertain of your authority and fearful you will not be respected. Therefore, you set out to prove who is in charge.

In combat especially, but in training as well, you are totally dependent upon your subordinates. You can succeed only to the degree you are willing to join them first, and then lead them by their consent—because they trust you and believe in you. You talk about “my outfit,” be it a battalion, company, battery, platoon, or squad, but it is not just yours. It is their unit, too. They were there before you and will remain after you. You are only on loan to the unit. You have been appointed and given the charge of helping them make it the most effective Army unit possible.

Communications are always problematic in organizations. You listen for what you want to hear and can never know enough. Again, your success depends on your subordinates. If you are any good at all, your subordinates will not shield you from the unpleasant.

When they do, it is because they are fearful. They have tested your courage to hear the truth and found you wanting. Also, they want to please; they want to handle problems themselves and not bother you with “trivial” details. Too often, however, what they see as trivial will be crucially important to your understanding. Unless you have worked extremely hard to gain their trust, unless they share your vision of what is really important, you will not have the information you need in a form you can use.

You have repeatedly heard that families are important. They are, but we are often unclear as to why. Yes, common decency requires we attend to families; happy families make happy soldiers, and all that. Yes, we recruit soldiers, but retain families; therefore, families are important. All these reasons are true. The real reason families are important, however, is that healthy families keep soldiers alive on the battlefield. My scientific colleagues have established that stress is cumulative. Soldiers who go into battle stressed with personal and family problems are at greater risk for panic, poor judgment, despair, and apathy in combat. Soldiers with family problems who break in battle also have lower odds for recovery.

We have known for a long time that troubled families produce troubled soldiers who create troubles in their units. However, the evidence is now clear that troubled units produce troubled soldiers who then create troubles in their families.

The causal chain is really a circle. We can pretty accurately assess the morale in our units in two ways: We can ask soldiers, or we can ask their families. They mirror each other.

I suggest, therefore, that you attend carefully to families in assessing your combat readiness. If you dare, judge your units by the degree of informal family participation. Families, especially wives, participate in group activities because they want to, not because they are ordered or “tasked” to attend.

I close with a golden rule of command. Consider how you would feel if you were bound by the same rules you impose on your soldiers. When you see barracks organized like basic training with tape on the floor for each piece of furniture, how would you feel if somebody were to organize your living room? How would you feel if your next commander changed the tapes? Then the next commander comes along and changes them back? We do this to soldiers in the barracks all the time, for no better reason than to prove to them (and ourselves) who is in charge.

In the name of pride, you sweat our troops to get increasing percentages of maximum scores on the PT test, or make them buff floors until they shine like shaving mirrors. Whose pride? You intend to improve morale, but the troops hate it. They do it in the hopes you will someday catch on and join the unit. You confuse what you do with the result you intend. Your soldiers really do want you to succeed because they want the unit to succeed. Their lives depend on the unit. So does yours. As their appointed leader you have great power to create misery and little power to reduce it, for you will be blind to its existence—unless you vigorously seek it out. What you intend is too often quite opposite of what you get. Your soldiers can only see what you do. They cannot know how you feel, or even your intentions to do good on their behalf. Your only hope is to concentrate on trust, communication, feedback, mentoring, and families. Use your power wisely; the troops are watching and silently voting every day.

ABOUT THE ARMY LEADERS' DESK REFERENCE FOR SOLDIER/FAMILY READINESS

Purpose

This desk reference provides commanders and leaders at all levels with a concise guidebook for preparing soldiers, their families, and volunteers for training missions and real-world deployments.

Scope

The *Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness* includes concise direction and guidance on soldier and family readiness actions, and responsibilities for commanders and leaders at all levels—from Department of the Army to unit level. Where rear detachments are authorized, special emphasis is placed on the roles of rear detachment officers in soldier and family readiness.

Primary References

1. AR 600-20 (Draft), *Army Command Policy*, Management of Family Readiness Groups, 2002.
2. AR 608-1, *Army Community Service Centers*, 2001.
3. DA PAM 608-47, *Guide to Establishing Family [Readiness] Groups* (to be incorporated into AR 600-20 [Draft] in 2002).
4. FM 22-100, *Military Leadership* (Oct. 83 and later revisions).
5. FM 22-103, *Leadership for Senior Leaders*.
6. Operation READY, curriculum of family readiness training materials developed by Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, under contract #DASWO1-01-P-0296 to U.S. Army Community and Family Service Center, Washington, D.C., 1994, 2002. This curriculum includes the following training modules and reference materials:
 - The Army Family Readiness Handbook
 - The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness (new)
 - The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook (new)
 - Army FRG Leader's Handbook
 - Family Assistance Center
 - Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness
 - Homecoming and Reunion

Assumptions

- Operational tempo in training and deployment environments will remain high for active and reserve component units for the next decade and beyond.
- Soldier/family readiness is a key factor in unit, soldier, and Army family morale, recruitment, and retention of soldiers and families and, ultimately, in successful achievement of military missions.
- Up-to-date Operation READY training materials are in place at all installations, and SFPC and FRP offices for and in active use by FRG leaders and key FRG committee chairpersons, FRG steering committee chairpersons, senior spouse family readiness advisors, commanders, rear detachment officers (RDOs), and non-commissioned officers (NCOs).
- The above premises apply to all active and reserve component units subject to deployment.

Concepts and Definitions

- Soldier/family readiness—see References 1 and 6, above.
- Family Readiness Group (FRG)—see References 1 and 4, above.
- Roles and structure of the FRG—see Reference 4, above.
- Soldier/Family Readiness Plan (SFRP)—prepared at every level from DA to unit. See sample SFRPs on pages 29–33.
- The Family Readiness Center (FRC) is not a Family Assistance Center (FAC).
 - Many Army units have established FRCs to assist the unit's families in communicating with deployed soldiers. FRCs often provide video-teleconferencing and e-mail resources for communication between families and deployed soldiers.
 - A deployed unit's FRC may provide information for accessing other family assistance personnel and services, such as emergency financial assistance and chaplains. FRCs are limited in terms of the essential services provided.
 - FRCs frequently provide a place for Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) to meet.
 - FRCs may have to borrow operations staff from the unit's organization.
 - FACs provide essential services, such as assistance with ID cards, a connection to medical facilities, and emergency financial assistance for families of deployed soldiers through DCA/ACS at a central location on the installation.

Soldier/Family Readiness Initiatives for Commanders

1. Soldier/family readiness is the responsibility of commanders and leaders at all levels; consequently, commanders at all levels must prepare Soldier/Family Readiness Plans (SFRPs) for their commands. Within the SFRP, the commander, in conjunction with the FRG leadership, establishes soldier/family readiness goals for the command. See sample SFRPs on pages 29–33.
2. Commanders and leaders at all levels must establish and support Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) for all their soldiers and families (immediate and extended).
3. Commanders and leaders must vest leadership of FRGs in spouse leaders and share with them responsibility and authority for establishing and maintaining effective FRGs.
4. Commanders are responsible to ensure that all soldiers and FRG leaders receive appropriate soldier/family readiness training as provided through Army Community Service.
5. Commanders are responsible for preparation of soldiers and families for deployments, separations, and reunions.
6. Commanders are responsible to ensure that RDOs and NCOs are trained to fulfill their roles during deployments and other commitments requiring commanders to be absent from garrison duty.
7. Commanders may wish to create a Soldier/Family Readiness Smart Book, to be maintained in his/her office or that of the RDO at all times. The Smart Book would include, as a minimum:
 - *The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002;
 - AR 600-20 (Draft), *Army Command Policy*, Management of Family Readiness Groups;
 - AR 608-1, *Army Community Service Centers*; and
 - *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002.

FAMILY AND SOLDIER READINESS SYSTEM

Excerpted from AR 600-20 (Draft)

The Army places a high value on both military and personal preparedness. Commanders have an obligation to provide assistance to establish and maintain personal and family affairs readiness.

Concept

1. The Army Family consists of soldiers (Active Army, Army National Guard [ARNG], and U.S. Army Reserve [USAR]), civilian employees, and retirees, regardless of marital status, and their family members.
2. The Family and Soldier Readiness System addresses the state of preparedness of the Army Family through proactive education and support programs that promote self reliance and enhance family well being. It includes those family assistance services and related programs, such as Army Community Service, Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve Family Programs, that support well-being, readiness, and retention, and meet the Army's obligations to soldiers, civilian employees, and their families by ensuring the effective interface between family assistance and family support. The Family and Soldier Readiness System includes Family Assistance Centers (FAC), Family Readiness Groups (FRG), Rear Detachment Commanders (RDC) (where applicable), and Family Readiness Liaison (FRL).
 - (a) Family Assistance is the contractual or statutory obligation the Army has to provide assistance (e.g., ID cards, Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System [DEERS], TRICARE) to its soldiers, civilian employees, retirees, and their dependents. This obligation also extends to the programs and services commanders use to fulfill their morale, welfare, and quality of life responsibilities, such as Army Community Service (ACS); Child and Youth Services (CYS); Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs, etc.
 - (b) Family support is the mutual reinforcement provided to soldiers, civilian employees, retirees and their family members—both immediate and extended. Examples include Family Readiness Groups, newsletters, telephone trees, and other volunteer programs and activities.
 - (c) Family readiness is the state of preparedness of soldiers and their families through proactive education and support programs that promote self-reliance and enhance individual and family well being.
3. Unit commanders at all levels are responsible for providing an effective family program and at a minimum will:
 - (a) Appoint in writing an officer or non-commissioned officer as a Family Readiness Liaison as an additional duty.
 - (b) Receive a family programs briefing from the ACS director/state family program coordinator/family readiness program manager within 60 days upon assumption of command.
 - (c) Provide predeployment briefings as required.

- (d) Ensure soldier and family member awareness of the Family and Soldier Readiness System.
- (e) Ensure soldier participation in mandatory training as identified in paragraph 5-10.b.(6)(d).
- (f) Ensure soldier and family member access to entitlements, family programs, and family service.
- (g) Ensure the proper documenting and monitoring of personal affairs readiness of soldiers, to include Family Care Plans (see paragraph 5-5).
- (h) Ensure inclusion of single personnel in well-being programs and initiatives.
- (i) Ensure the Family Readiness Group is established and operates in accordance with “Management of Family Readiness Groups” of this regulation.
- (j) Ensure adequate funding is provided for in the unit’s operating budget for authorized Family Readiness Group expenditures.

Soldier/Family Readiness Roles, Structures, and Responsibilities

Roles

1. Commanders are responsible for all aspects of soldier/family readiness within their commands.
2. Commanders ensure that a unit soldier/family readiness organization (FRG) is established, as illustrated in Figure 1.
3. Commanders ensure that soldier/family readiness responsibilities are planned and carried out.
4. Commanders delegate authority to and work through spouse soldier/family readiness leadership to accomplish command SFRP plans and goals.
5. Commanders supervise spouse leadership using coaching–supporting styles of leadership.
6. Spouse leaders supervise and operate unit FRGs—commanders and other soldier leaders do not.
7. Soldiers do not fill any key FRG roles; they support and assist spouse leaders in those roles as needed.

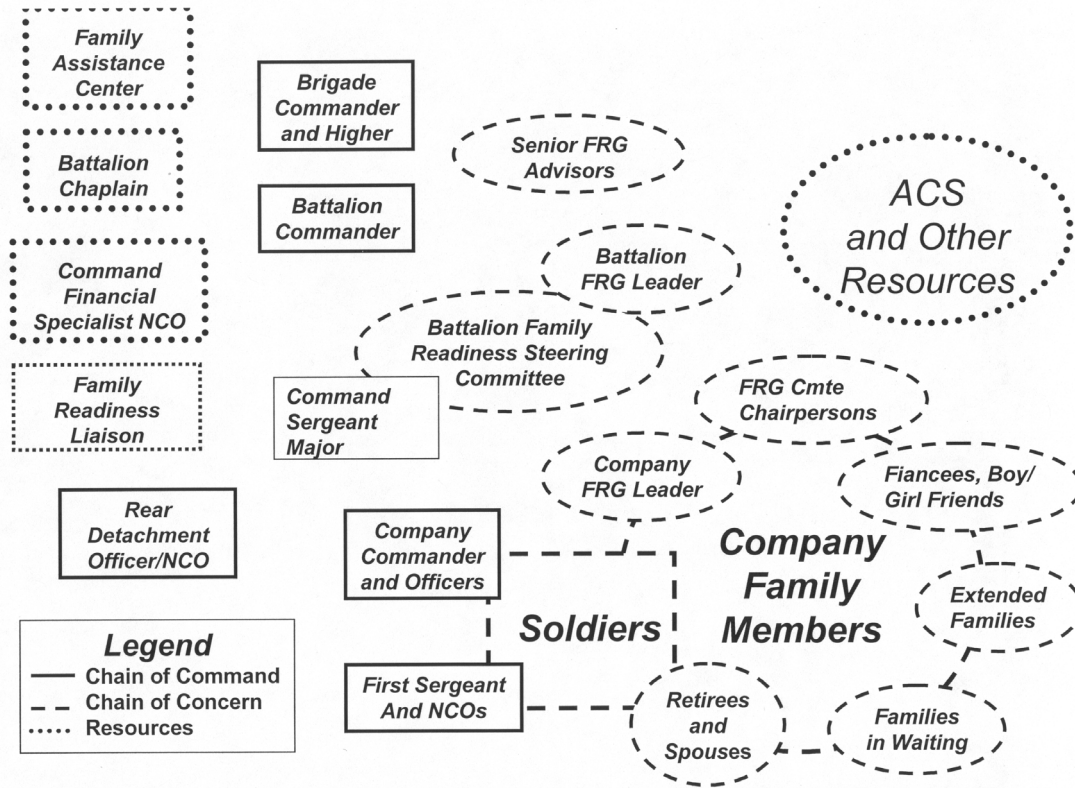


Figure 1. Soldier/Family Readiness Structure

Structures

The family support structure, shown in Figure 2, demonstrates the relationship among the three components of Army family support: Army Community Service (ACS) and the Family Assistance Center (FAC); the FRG; and the unit itself through the rear detachment commander and the family readiness liaison (FRL).

The typical Family Readiness Group organization is shown in Figure 3. Units may vary the organizational structure to meet local needs. Reserve component commanders and FRG leaders may find a geographical basis for building the FRG more effective than unit-based, in terms of support and social aspects of family readiness.

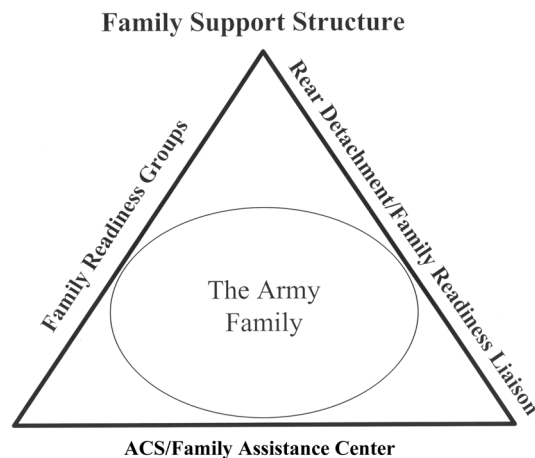
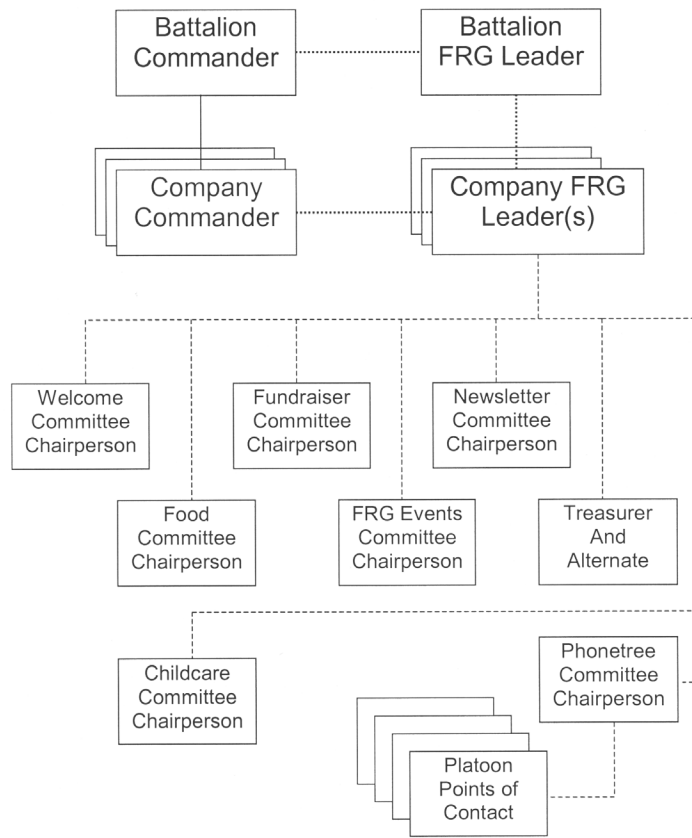


Figure 2. Family Support Structure.



TYPICAL FRG ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Figure 3. Typical Unit Family Readiness Group Organization Chart.

Responsibilities

Unit Commander

- Responsible for unit Soldier/Family Readiness Program (SFRP); prepares unit SFRP and sets family readiness goals based on direction from next-higher headquarters and with assistance of spouse FRG leadership
- Establishes and supports a unit FRG
- Appoints, in writing, FRG leader or co-leaders and treasurer and alternate
- Provides support to FRG leaders and supervises their effort toward family readiness goals
- Delegates authority to FRG leaders to organize and operate the unit FRG
- Provides NAF and/or APF resources, as available, to help fund official FRG activities
- Coordinates regularly with FRG leaders to gauge progress, provide help, and resolve issues
- Through the FRL, provides to FRG leaders a current unit phone roster and reasonably available resources
- Prepares authorization letter for FRG volunteers to open FRG fund bank account
- Ensures that all soldiers, families, and FRG leadership get family readiness training
- Reviews and approves FRG fund status, fundraisers, and FRG activities
- Prepares request letters to DCA for proposed fundraisers
- Appoints a Family Readiness Liaison to assist FRGs
- Appoints a rear detachment officer when command is deployed (where authorized)
- Ensures that vital family readiness information is relayed to FRG leader and soldiers
- Encourages all soldiers, families, and extended families to participate in FRG activities
- Ensures that predeployment briefings are conducted for all soldiers and families prior to deployments
- Ensures that the FRG maintains contact with families and families in waiting
- Ensures that post resources are available for soldiers and their families
- Wholeheartedly promotes diversity within the FRG
- Approves and signs off on official newsletters
- Reports any serious family readiness issues or events to next higher commander

Rear Detachment Officer (RDO)

- Same duties as unit commander, above
- Maintains regular contact with unit commander at mission location
- Ensures that FRG members have opportunities to maintain contact with deployed soldiers
- Coordinates with American Red Cross regarding emergency information on unit soldiers and family members
- In conjunction with FRG leader and FRL, prepares and submits Weekly Family Readiness Situation Report (FR Sitrep) to next higher
- In conjunction with FRG leader, coordinates with FRG steering committee, higher command, post resources, and Family Assistance Center (if applicable)
- Provides information on important unit news to FRG leader
- Fields questions and concerns from FRG leaders and, when necessary, FRG members

Unit FRG Leader/Co-Leaders

- Is a member of the unit commander's special staff
- Knows and supports the unit family readiness plan and the commander's goals
- Provides overall leadership for the unit FRG; supervises all FRG volunteers
- Prepares and provides job descriptions to all FRG volunteers
- Coordinates regularly with commander, first sergeant, and steering committee regarding FRG activities and events, unit training schedules, and missions
- Makes key FRG decisions and confers with other leaders on group decisions and planning
- Plans FRG activities to ensure the commander's family readiness goals are met
- Plans and runs FRG meetings
- Recruits and trains FRG treasurer, alternate, and committee chairpersons
- Organizes the FRG so that all key tasks are adequately covered
- Ensures that all FRG members are trained in appropriate family readiness topics
- Ensures that phone roster is current, FRG phonetree is established and tested often, and regular contact is made with all family members
- Ensures that new soldiers and families are welcomed and invited to FRG functions
- Reviews FRG fund status with treasurer and commander at regular intervals
- Prepares and submits FRG fund spending plan to membership
- Supervises planning and running of FRG events

- Plans predeployment briefings for unit soldiers and families
- Ensures that Operation READY materials are on-hand for soldiers and families
- Prepares a unit Deployment Guide and submits for commander's approval
- Ensures that post resources are available for FRG members
- Ensures that critical FRG information is shared and rumor and gossip are controlled
- Helps resolve conflicts and other problems
- Keeps RDO informed of any serious family readiness issues
- Submits information to RDO for Weekly Family Readiness Situation Report
- Maintains volunteer service records
- Ensures that volunteers are recognized for their contributions
- Reviews FRG newsletters before submitting to commander for approval and publication

Battalion/Higher Commander

- Supports and supervises the FRG advisory or steering committee
- Sets battalion (or higher command) family readiness goals based on next higher command family readiness mandates and inputs of steering committee
- Reviews and approves unit family readiness plans
- Supervises subordinate commanders in building and maintaining viable FRGs
- Regularly reviews FRG programs in each subordinate command
- Coordinates with garrison and other commanders and staff on major family readiness issues
- Provides important family readiness information to FRG committee chairperson

Battalion/Higher FRG Steering/Advisory Committee Chairperson

- Knows and supports command family readiness policies and goals
- Reviews next higher command's family readiness plan
- Prepares draft family readiness plan for the command
- Oversees and supports FRG leadership and activities of all subordinate units
- Provides assistance to FRG leaders and helps resolve family readiness issues
- Prepares monthly command family readiness Sitrep and provides to commander
- Conducts regular and special FRG steering/advisory committee meetings
- Provides important family readiness information to unit FRG leaders

First Sergeants and Command Sergeants Major

- Knows and supports command family readiness policies and goals
- Reviews next higher command's family readiness plan
- Assists commander and FRG leaders with drafting and implementing family readiness plan
- Provides current information to FRG leaders regarding new soldiers and families
- Participates in unit and command family readiness program meetings
- Encourages all soldiers and families to participate actively in unit FRG
- Working with FRG leadership and commanders, establishes and enforces behavioral norms for soldiers at family readiness functions
- Assists commander and FRG leaders with getting soldiers and families trained and prepared for deployments
- At intervals, works with commanders and FRG leaders to assess the efficacy of unit FRGs
- Works with personnel officer/NCOs to ensure that applicable family readiness regulations and policies are on hand and up to date
- Confers with FRG leaders on family readiness issues and assists them with resolution
- With FRG leaders, reports command family readiness status and serious problems to commander
- Supervises command/unit new-soldier sponsorship program
- Performs special family readiness actions as requested by commander/RDO

Family Readiness Liaison

- Serves as link between command and families, soldiers, and installation service providers
- Coordinates with ACS Mob/Dep Program, unit FRG leaders, FRG steering/advisory committee, and command training and personnel officers to arrange for FRG training and predeployment briefings for all soldiers and families
- Ensures families and soldiers are referred for financial counseling, Family Advocacy, or other essential services as needed
- Serves as the link between the FRG and commander
- Provides FRG logistical and administrative support as needed
- Updates the unit roster monthly, annotating new members, and provides to FRG leaders
- Provides support for the FRG newsletter production

- Maintains a record of addresses and phone numbers of families who leave the geographical area during deployments
- Maintains Operation READY videotapes and training modules for use by unit FRGs

Command Financial Specialist/ACS Financial Readiness Staff

- Supports battalion family readiness plan
- Serves as a financial readiness resource for the command and FRGs

FRG Treasurer and Alternate

- Gets appointment orders and checking account authorization letter from commander; sets up the FRG fund bank account; cosigns with alternate(s)
- Prepares draft correspondence to IRS and state to obtain employer identification number for the bank account
- Collects all monies and receipts from fundraisers, donations, and grants from unit budget; carefully accounts for them in FRG fund ledger, and deposits monies in the fund account
- Checks monthly bank statement and matches entries with fund ledger entries
- Resolves account discrepancies with bank bookkeepers
- Works with FRG leader to prepare draft FRG spending plan
- Disburses monies to FRG committees as detailed in the FRG spending plan
- Checks expenditures to ensure that FRG spending plan is followed
- Maintains FRG fund ledger, bank records, reimbursement claims, and related correspondence; prepares reports
- Reports any irregularities in FRG fund to FRG leader, commander, RDO
- At least monthly, prepares fund status reports and submits to FRG leader
- Accounts to the FRG leader, commander (or RDO), and FRG membership on a regular basis as to the current status of the FRG fund account

FRG Phonetree Points of Contact

- Contact all family members on regular basis (at least once monthly—more often when the unit is deployed)
- Receive phone calls of other members and point them to resources for self help
- Help control rumors and gossip
- Pass on information to families from the FRG leader, commander, and/or RDO
- Report significant family readiness issues to phonetree committee chairperson or FRG leader

Command Chaplain

- Provides spiritual leadership, guidance, and assistance to soldiers and families
- Serves on the command family readiness steering committee
- Works with Red Cross, commanders/RDOs, and affected soldiers and their families in emergency situations, grief counseling, etc.

Army Community Service/SFPC/FRPM

- Provides essential services and assistance to family members, soldiers, and FRGs
- Provides training, Operation READY training materials, and information briefings for commanders, RDOs, FRGs, family members, and soldiers (active and reserve)
- Provides, on request, predeployment and redeployment briefings and training for all assigned and attached units
- Maintains stock of and distributes family readiness pamphlets, directories, Operation READY videotapes and training modules, regulations, and family readiness leader manuals
- Through Mob/Dep program, serves as installation subject matter expert on family readiness matters; handles telephone, internet, and walk-in requests for family readiness information, materials, and assistance
- Mob/Dep program operates scheduled and special courses, teaches FRG-related and other training programs
- Coordinates with OSJA and garrison command to resolve legal and policy matters on family readiness issues
- Mobilizes, operates, and supervises the Family Assistance Center on order

Family Assistance Center (FAC)

- Mobilizes and operates on order from installation commander
- Provides essential services and assistance to families of active component (AC) and reserve component (RC) forces deploying

Family Members

- Support their soldiers
- Participate in and contribute to FRG activities
- Keep personal affairs in reasonable order at all times
- Know and use post resources available to them
- Resolve their personal problems with self reliance

- Inform RDO, FRL, and FRG leader when they plan to leave the area during deployments
- Request assistance from FRG leader with problems of common interest or those for which they need referrals

Soldiers

- Have primary responsibility for family and personal readiness
- Support and participate in the Family and Soldier Readiness System
- Keep themselves and families informed concerning key personnel information
- Ensure the FRL is informed of the current address and phone number of family during deployments
- Encourage spouses and families to participate actively in FRG activities—and participate themselves when possible

Other Key FRG Members

- See Job Descriptions in *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002

SAMPLE FAMILY READINESS PLAN—BATTALION LEVEL*

Purpose

To ensure that:

- all unit and headquarters Family Readiness Groups are in place and effective,
- all battalion soldiers and their families are trained and prepared,
- all essential post resources are accessible by battalion families for deployments,
- all command family readiness goals are met.

References

- AR 600-20 (Draft), *Army Command Policy*, Management of Family Readiness Groups
- AR 608-1, *Army Community Service Centers*
- DA PAM 608-47, *A Guide to Establishing Family [Readiness] Groups*
- *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002
- Installation Family Readiness Guide
- Installation Mobilization Readiness Plan _____ (date), Annex _____, Family Assistance Center
- Installation Regs and MOIs (newsletters, fundraisers, etc.)
- Brigade and division Soldier/Family Readiness Plans
- Battalion Soldier/Family Readiness Smart Book
- *Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002

Key Tasks

1. Review family readiness plans and goals two levels up.
2. Review existing battalion and unit family readiness plans (if any).
3. Review past command or IG inspection reports and action plans.
4. Set up and conduct key leader (command and FRG) briefings with FRG steering committee (brigade) and ACS Mob/Dep.
5. Commander and battalion FRG leader draft or update battalion family readiness goals.
6. Direct and monitor establishment of unit FRGs (if applicable).
7. Publish directives for FRG training at all units and headquarters.
8. Plan and conduct FRG advisory committee meetings with all unit FRGs.

9. Review units' Soldier Readiness Processing (SRPs).
10. Assess unit FRG effectiveness.

Repeat process until all battalion family readiness goals are met and key readiness indicators are "go" within each subordinate unit.

* Company/battery/troop, battalion/squadron, brigade/regiment

SAMPLE FAMILY READINESS PLAN—UNIT LEVEL

Purpose

To ensure that:

- unit soldier/family readiness structure and functions are in place and effective,
- all unit soldiers and their families are prepared,
- all essential post resources are accessible by unit families for deployments, and
- all command family readiness goals are met.

References

- AR 600-20 (Draft), *Army Command Policy*, Management of Family Readiness Groups
- AR 608-1, *Army Community Service Centers*
- DA PAM 608-47, *A Guide to Establishing Family [Readiness] Groups*
- *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002
- Installation Family Readiness Guide
- Installation Mobilization Readiness Plan _____ (date), Annex _____, Family Assistance Center
- Installation Regs and MOIs (newsletters, fundraisers, etc.)
- Battalion and brigade Family Readiness Plans
- Unit/Soldier/Family Readiness Smart Book
- *Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook*, Operation READY, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, March 2002
- USARC Regulation 608-1, *Family Readiness Handbook*, August 2000

Key Tasks

1. Review family readiness plans two levels up.
2. Review existing unit family readiness plan (if any).
3. Review past command or IG inspection reports and action plans.
4. Set up and conduct key leader (command and FRG) briefings with FRG advisory committee (battalion) and ACS Mob/Dep.
5. Commander and FRG leader draft or update unit family readiness goals.
6. Establish FRG or, for existing FRG, assess its effectiveness.
7. Train all soldiers, volunteers, and families (see below).
8. Organize FRG structure and functional areas.

9. Plan and conduct FRG meetings and outings.
10. Foster diversity and inclusiveness.
11. Train key soldier and spouse leaders; train all FRG members in:
 - a. Operation READY training (mobilization and deployment readiness), and
 - b. Army Family Team Building.
12. Ensure that RDO/NCOs and CFSNCOs (if assigned) are trained and certified.
13. Train all soldiers and spouses in soldier/family readiness.
14. Arrange special FRG training (food safety, childcare, FRG treasurer).
15. Arrange FRG training on dealing with separation, reunion, etc.
16. Contact key post service organizations for training, briefings, and resources.
17. Prepare/update Family Readiness Smart Book.
18. Conduct Soldier Readiness Processing (SRPs).
19. Ensure that all single and dual soldier parents have current Family Care Plans.
20. Plan and conduct predeployment briefings (Mob/Dep, chaplain, Red Cross, SJA, FRL, etc.) See sample predeployment briefing on page 36.
21. Assess unit FRG effectiveness.

PREDEPLOYMENT BRIEFINGS

Predeployment briefings for soldiers and family members help equip them to cope with an upcoming separation by acquainting them with unit plans and making available handbooks and information on spouse contacts and post and community resources.

The following guidance refers to briefings that will be conducted on the battalion level when the battalion deploys as part of a task force. Companies are encouraged to conduct similar briefings when they deploy as smaller elements. These milestones should be kept in mind, as advance planning is important:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Six weeks prior to deployment	Schedule briefing to include facility, speakers, equipment, refreshments, childcare	S-1, S-3
Five weeks prior to deployment	Send out personal invitations from battalion commander	S-1
Three weeks prior to deployment	Conduct briefing	Battalion commander

The battalion should publish procedures for the conduct of battalion predeployment briefings, reserve the facility to be used, and ensure adequate equipment is available. The S-1 should schedule briefing presentations, send out invitations, designate an officer in charge (OIC) for the briefing, provide for refreshments, and arrange for childcare. In addition, he/she should ensure that pertinent information is prepared and distributed at the briefing—including information from the American Red Cross (ARC), Army Community Service (ACS), and other family-helping agencies. The briefings can be built on a schedule similar to the following:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Presented by</u>	<u>Time</u>
Welcome	Battalion commander	15 min
Personnel issues	Battalion S-1	15 min
Predeployment Information	ACS staff	10 min
Security	Provost Marshal Office	05 min
Break		15 min
Rear Detachment Concerns	RDC	10 min
Financial Assistance	Financial Readiness/ CFSNCO	10 min
Religious Support	Unit Chaplain	10 min
Legal Issues	Staff Judge Advocate Ofc	15 min

Other optional briefers may be the Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator or key FRG personnel. A Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) officer might make a presentation on Powers of Attorney and wills. Following the formal briefing, companies may want to hold FRG meetings to elaborate on issues specific to their group.

A great deal of planning must go into a successful briefing, and there is no shortage of good material. The remainder of this section outlines things to be taken into consideration in planning predeployment briefings and areas of concern that might be discussed. There will be more material here than a single briefing can address; the content should be tailored to local needs and might be varied from one deployment to the next. Some topics may already have been covered in FRG workshops.

A group planning session for the briefing could include the major installation family support personnel, Guard or Reserve Family Program coordinator, and representatives of the unit to be supported, such as:

- the unit commander and senior NCO (with FRG leadership, as appropriate);
- an ACS representative; and
- the unit chaplain, TRICARE representative, a representative from the legal office, or other representatives, as appropriate.

Whenever possible, it might be a good idea to have speakers from the civilian community to present ways the spouse can become involved in the larger community.

In choosing an appropriate date, consider the deployment needs of the unit. Time selection is a difficult task as many families have both spouses working. When large numbers are deploying, consider both a daytime and an evening briefing. If only one briefing is decided upon, most likely an evening time would reach the greatest number.

The length of the briefing will depend upon choices made in content, but a good rule of thumb is not to exceed two hours. Shown below are some options to be coordinated with deployment-processing agencies.

- Weekday afternoon at approximately 1300. Provide childcare for children who are not in school. Soldiers who attend should leave work (if not in the duty section) at the end of the briefing.
- Weekday morning at approximately 0930 to ensure that children are in school. Release soldiers from duty to transport family members, if needed, and to attend the briefing.
- Weekday evening at approximately 1900 or 1930. Provide childcare.

Location and meeting area are crucial. Ensure that the space available can accommodate the anticipated number of attendees and that there is adequate parking nearby. Consider the briefing an opportunity to develop a sense of “family” within the unit.

Two types of issues should be covered. Some material should deal with the emotions associated with family separation, such as stress, communicating feelings, and helping children cope. There should also be information on practical aspects of deployment. This would include a mission statement, standard procedures, readiness checklists, and so on.

One battalion commander arranged for the NCO Club and brought more than 400 persons to a briefing to send off two batteries to Bosnia. Ninety-two donated pizzas were served at 6:00 p.m. The briefing began at 6:30 p.m. to a quiet and attentive audience, with many children. The briefers spoke for 10 minutes max. At 8:00 p.m., the commander told the soldiers and families that he would care for the families remaining “as if they were our very own.” After taking three questions from the floor, he adjourned the group. The briefers remained for a short time to answer other questions.

Predeployment Training

Predeployment training materials for FRG and unit classes are available through your ACS Center, mobilization and deployment readiness section, SFPC and FRPM.

The Operation READY training modules are:

- The Army Family Readiness Handbook
- The Army FRG Leader's Handbook
- Family Assistance Center
- Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness
- Homecoming and Reunion

Operation READY videos to supplement these modules are titled:

- *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles*
- *Making Your Reunion Work*
- *Family Assistance Center*
- *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*
- *Introduction to Operation READY* (new)
- *Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Army Life, Think ACS* (new)

Children's Workbooks for use by parents with their children

SUCCESSFUL FRGs IN THE ARMY TODAY

This material is taken from the Newsletter of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) No. 01-3 JAN 01 Family Readiness; Techniques and Procedures on Family Support Initiatives. Website: <http://call.army.mil>

Mailing Address:

Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL)

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)

Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350

In many units, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs), formerly known as Family Support Groups (FSGs), are the centerpiece of the family readiness effort. This chapter examines the organization and operations of successful FRGs in the Army today.

The main goals of the FRG are threefold:

- The FRG aims to serve as a link between the deployed unit and families, whether or not those families remain at Home Station. In this capacity, the FRG serves as a conduit for command information on deployment and redeployment dates, changes in the unit's status or mission, and other items of interest to family members.
- The FRG facilitates deployment and redeployment briefings and activities in conjunction with the unit commander, rear detachment commander (RDC), and installation support agencies.
- The FRG serves as a mutual support group for family members, stepping in with advice, personal counseling, or assistance when families have problems during the unit deployment.

The most effective FRGs are those established as part of the unit's ongoing and routine mission preparation, rather than those created just prior to deployment.

Family Readiness Group Organization and Operations

The organization of an FRG is a key element in determining how well the group functions during times of deployment. In support of Operation INTRINSIC ACTION in Kuwait and the stabilization force in Bosnia, the deployed units' FRGs developed effective organizational structures and operating methods in support of family readiness during the lengthy deployments.

Family Problems

Leaders indicate that about 90 percent of family problems they encounter during deployments are financial. Too frequently, soldiers deploy without completely explaining what bills need to be paid. They also fail to provide their spouses with access to all of the financial instruments required to make those payments. FRG leaders cite the month

immediately following a unit's deployment as the worst period for these financial problems. During that month, in addition to discovering that they did not know what bills to pay, where to pay them, or how to pay them, the demands and stresses of separation overwhelm many spouses, compounding financial problems. These problems and others identified by FRG personnel can be avoided in many cases through better communication between the spouse and soldier prior to the soldier's deployment.

FRG personnel identified "spouses that popped out of the woodwork," those spouses for which the unit had no records. Similarly, FRG leaders also identified spouses who spoke no English, spouses who had no means of transportation (or a driver's license) for them or their children, and spouses in need of counseling for depression and anxiety. FRG leaders cautioned against allowing rear detachment personnel to perform personal services for spouses (such as lawn mowing) based on ethical concerns. The word can spread quickly and soon everyone has a job they need completed. Like most unit commanders, FRG leaders generally reported spending 90 percent of their time on 10 percent of the people.

Family Readiness Groups of Task Force Eagle and Operation INTRINSIC ACTION units played a critical role in controlling rumors related to unit deployments, thus enhancing the units' command information programs and unit morale. Units had the responsibility to support rear detachment and FRG efforts with timely and accurate information. Company- or battery-level FRG leadership then used a variety of means to disseminate the information, including newsletters, monthly meetings, bulletin boards, telephone trees, and Internet sites.

Additionally, rear detachment personnel and FRG leaders often positioned themselves at the Family Readiness Center during blocks of VTC time or at other places they were likely to find spouses. In short, the most effective family readiness operations were those in which deployed units, rear detachment personnel, and family readiness leaders talked frequently and substantively.

Key Lessons Learned

- The most effective Family Readiness Groups are those that have been in existence for some time and not created just prior to the deployment.
- Successful FRGs contacted families every month and maintained constant contact with many of them.
- Financial problems will probably be the first issue to surface due to a deployment.
- Dissemination of information should be accomplished using as many methods as possible and performed continuously in order to reach everyone.

Family Readiness Group Leadership

The primary factor in determining the success of a unit's Family Readiness Group is the energy levels of FRG leaders. Company- and battalion-level FRG operations live or die based on the energy of the personnel leading the family support initiatives at Home Station and on command emphasis placed on FRG operations by the unit's leadership. In most cases, the best approach to identifying leaders of the FRG is to ask spouses to volunteer.

Successful FRG leaders generally are charismatic, people-oriented, caring people who tend to volunteer their time in the community in other ways as well. Family Readiness Groups in which the commander or first sergeant's spouse took the lead without really wanting to be involved generally suffered later. At the same time, it is desirable to have someone lead the FRG whose spouse is of moderate rank within the military unit, since those individuals with less rank generally tend to get less information informally, or they get the information later in the process than those of higher rank. In any event, the spouses of company leaders should serve on the FRG steering committee, regardless of their general interest in FRG operations, to facilitate the general two-way flow of information and to assist the FRG in making organizational decisions.

Family Readiness Group leaders are identified as those who are energetic and keep going until the job is done. At the same time, many FRG leaders are overworked, particularly in cases where units are unexpectedly extended in the theater of operations. Additionally, support agency personnel noted that FRG leaders often tend to assist everyone by themselves instead of relying on agency personnel or other spouses within the FRG. Unfortunately, it was also noted that often other spouses, upon seeing that the FRG leader was willing to work all issues, were inclined to leave the myriad tasks to the FRG leader to accomplish alone. FRG leaders should delegate problem solving, as appropriate, to other responsible spouses, installation support agencies, and rear detachment personnel.

Key Lessons Learned

- The energy of Family Readiness Group leaders can determine the success or failure of the group.
- Family Readiness Group leaders need to delegate responsibilities when assisting families.

Family Readiness Group Tasks Before, During, and After Deployment

Before. A functional Family Readiness Group has many tasks when a unit is notified of a deployment. Commanders and FRG leaders need to screen the soldiers to find those who have family members with special circumstances or special care needs. In addition to screening family members for pregnancies, exceptional family member medical conditions, and other situations prior to deployment, units should be aware of family members who might not speak English so that they can properly plan alternative ways to keep those family members informed. After identifying those individuals with special

circumstances, it is then necessary to adapt an overall FRG plan for those family needs.

During. A Family Readiness Group should also determine which spouses plan on departing the Home Station area after the unit deploys. Some spouses may want to live with relatives for support during the deployment, so units and FRG leaders need to make special provisions to disseminate information to them and to assist with medical and dental care and other personnel services. Within the stabilization force (SFOR), informal sampling indicated that 10 to 25 percent of families in most units relocated away from the vicinity of the Home Station installation during the period of the deployment. In addition, some of the augmentees' families also relocated during their deployment windows. While the task force commander made arrangements for these families to have access to command information through a toll-free telephone number and a frequently updated website, some soldiers reported difficulties with family support. Specific problems included securing health and dental care, and access to commissaries and other military facilities. Additionally, soldiers reported problems with telephones (no DSN access) and difficulty in achieving access to command information at the unit level.

After. Once a unit learns that the troops are coming home, arrangements should be made to conduct reunion briefings. Deployed task forces that conducted well-prepared and comprehensive reunion briefings significantly reduced incidences of spousal abuse, DUIs, and other redeployment problems among unit soldiers. Some units provided group counseling and briefings on likely sources of friction among family members after a lengthy separation. The briefings included issues of control within the family, established routines within the family that may have changed during the separation, changed financial circumstances, and renewed relationships with children. Additionally, units conducted briefings aimed at ensuring that soldiers used alcohol responsibly upon their return, a particularly appropriate topic since alcohol had been off-limits during the months of deployment. Chaplains served as the primary action agent for briefings in the field, and FRG leaders and rear detachment commanders facilitated briefings at Home Station.

Key Lessons Learned

- Spouses have special concerns, such as pregnancy or language, which will require that the support plan be adapted to their needs.
- Determine which families will be staying in the area and which will live with other family members during the deployment.
- Reunion briefings are very important for the family to properly welcome home the soldier.

Training Family Readiness Group Leaders

Some units went to great lengths to train their FRG volunteers. One Task Force Eagle commander conducted significant FRG training prior to the unit's deployment to support the effective execution of FRG tasks at Home Station. Training topics included:

- Family crisis response and referral
- Basic military justice
- Suicide warning signs
- Supply accountability
- Legal information
- Personnel policies and accountability
- Family readiness group organization and operations
- Chaplain support services
- Family advocacy
- Casualty procedures
- American Red Cross capabilities
- Vehicle and weapon registration policies
- Housing policies
- Basic finance
- Childcare options
- Public affairs
- Sponsorship standards
- Physical security

The commander then conducted situational training exercises (STX) designed to ensure that FRG and rear detachment personnel could respond effectively to the inevitable challenges that would arise during the deployment.

Other Considerations

There are a few other considerations that smaller units should keep in mind. Small units deploying to the theater of operations from posts other than the Home Station of the task force headquarters have special FRG coordination considerations. Task Force Eagle included a number of small units that deployed from Home Stations other than the division headquarters post. For these units (this includes active duty), there were special coordination and deployment considerations that impacted adversely on their family support initiatives. Several of these units, unlike the units belonging to the deployed division headquarters, were unable to reconnoiter the theater of operations prior to deploying. Similarly, given short notice in some cases and unclear mission guidance in others, these small units had difficulty getting installation support for the training of FRG personnel and for the Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) activities needed prior to deployment. In many cases, there was little or no coordination between the gaining unit headquarters and the small unit augmentees until both units were on the ground in the theater of operations.

For additional information on managing FRGs, please refer to the Army FRG Leader's Handbook (2002) from Operation READY. Copies are available at your ACS Center, mobilization and deployment readiness section, SFPC and FRPM.

For additional information on managing FRGs, please refer to the Army FRG Leader's Handbook (2002) from Operation READY. Copies are available at your ACS Center, mobilization and deployment readiness section, SFPC and FRPM.